

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8411

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 3024

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR GR US

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL GREEK INQUIRY REGARDING REPORTED REMARKS

BY VICE PRESIDENT

REF: ATHENS 3000; ATHENS 2992

1. IN ABSENCE OF AMBASSADOR ON OFFICIAL VISIT TO CRETE, DCM WAS CONVOKED BY MFA'S DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS TZOUNIS, WHO EXPRESSED GOG'S "CONCERN" ABOUT REMARKS ON GREECE, TURKEY AND CYPRUS ATTRIBUTED BY WASHINGTON POST TO VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER (AFTERNOON PRESS TODAY CONTINUES TO GIVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO STORY, FEATURING REBUTTALS BY OPPOSITION LEADERS MAVROS AND PAPANDREOU). TZOUNIS SAID THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO BELABOR WHAT SHOULD BE AN OBVIOUS POINT, BUT THAT HE HOPED WASHINGTON WAS AWARE OF WIDESPREAD INDIGNATION CAUSED BY REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO THE VICE PRESIDENT WHICH, HE ADDED, WOULD COMPLICATE US-GREEK RELATIONS IN A PARTICULARLY DELICATE PERIOD UNLESS THEY WERE CLARIFIED OR DENIED. TZOUNIS TOLD DCM THAT HE UNDERSTOOD FROM PARIS THAT CARAMANLIS HAD BEEN GREATLY UPSET BY REPORTED REMARKS AND, IN VIEW OF OPPOSITION STATEMENTS, GOG MIGHT FEEL COMPELLED TO ISSUE STATEMENT OF ITS OWN. AMBASSADOR ALEXANDRAKIS HAD ALREADY BEEN INSTRUCTED TO SEE UNDER SECY SISCO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

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TO OBTAIN CLARIFICATION.

2. DCM STATED THAT HE HOPED GOG WOULD NOT ENGAGE IN POLEMICS ON BASIS OF UNCONFIRMED AND QUITE POSSIBLY MISREPORTED STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO VICE PRESIDENT. HE REMINDED TZOUNIS THAT PRESIDENT FORD HAD RECENTLY RE-AFFIRMED THE US FRIENDSHIP FOR GREECE AND OUR DESIRE TO ASSIST GREECE WITH MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID. HE ASSURED TZOUNIS HOWEVER THAT EMBASSY WOULD CONVEY GOG CONCERN TO WASHINGTON AND ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE CLARIFICATION OF WHAT, IF ANYTHING, VICE PRESIDENT HAD ACTUALLY SAID ON SUBJECT OF GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS AND CYPRUS.

3. COMMENT: OPPOSITION ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT FOR POLITICAL REASONS REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO VICE PRESIDENT PUTS PRESSURE ON CARAMANLIS TO GET INTO PRINT HIMSELF. BITTERNESS OF REACTION HERE CAN IN PART BE ATTRIBUTED TO FACT THAT VICE PRESIDENT HAS ENJOYED AN EXTREMELY FAVORABLE REPUTATION IN GREECE AND HAS GENERALLY BEEN REGARDED AS SYMPATHETIC TO GREECE. CARAMANLIS HIMSELF HAS HIGH REGARD FOR VICE PRESIDENT WHICH WAS REFLECTED LAST FALL IN HIS WARM MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATION IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE VICE PRESIDENT'S CONFIRMATION.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT ATMOSPHERE WOULD BE COOLED, AND FURTHER VERBAL FIREWORKS AVOIDED, IF STATEMENT OF "CLARIFICATION" COULD BE ISSUED, PREFERABLY BY VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AND IN HIS NAME WHICH INCLUDED WARM EXPRESSION OF FRIENDSHIP FOR GREECE AND RECOGNITION OF IMPORTANCE VICE PRESIDENT ATTACHES TO CLOSE GREEK-US RELATIONS. WE SHOULD RECEIVE SUCH A STATEMENT BY NOON SATURDAY, APRIL 19 (ATHENS TIME) TO ASSURE PROMINENT PLACEMENT IN SUNDAY PAPERS. THIS IS PARTICULARLY DESIRABLE IN VIEW OF DELICATE STAGE WE HAVE REACHED IN OUR BASE NEGOTIATIONS. WE HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED INDICATION FROM GREEK NEGOTIATOR CALOGERAS THAT VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORTED REMARKS WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR GOG TO AGREE TO CONCESSIONS WE ARE SEEKING RELATED TO US FACILITIES AT HELLENIKON AIR BASE. (BEING REPORTED SEPTEL).
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